

JUL 13 1925 /

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"THE UNKNOWN LOVER" ✓ ✓

✓ Written and directed by Victor Hugo Halperin ✓ ✓

~~Seven Part Drama~~

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Synopsis

Upon the death of her father, a well-known research chemist, Elaine Kent, intent upon studying sculpturing in Paris for a career, opens a small studio on the fashionable New Harbor beach, hoping that by obtaining small commissions from the wealthy beach resorters, she can earn her tuition abroad. She is persistently sought in marriage but constantly refuses Fred Wagner, a young well-to-do dye manufacturer. He is a practical, unimaginative individual who cannot understand why Elaine prefers an art career to a comfortable marriage with himself.

Elaine's first patron is the wealthy, happy-go-lucky idler, Kenneth Billings Jr. irresponsible, dissolute spender of his father's millions. She models a group statue for him of Gale Norman, his fiancée - a dashing debutante - and several of her friends. Fred Wagner, jealous of the apparent attraction Kenneth has for Elaine, warns her of Kenneth's bad reputation. He is "dangerous to women". For the first time in his life, Kenneth is serious and proposes to Elaine, who refuses him because of his indolence - taking little stock in his promises to reform and become "a success in life."

Elaine is invited by Gale to a gorgeous party, where the game of "Unknown Lover" is played. "Every woman has an 'Unknown Lover'" the girls are told. "In every woman's heart she cherishes this dream of the ideal male. Sometimes she knows him for her husband or sweetheart -- sometimes not." Then each girl is asked "Would you know your Unknown Lover if you met him?" The men in the party are garbed alike and masked, -- their identities hidden. By a spin of the numbered wheel (each girl and man having a number corresponding to those on the wheel) a masked "Unknown Lover" is chosen. Elaine's number corresponds to the number of the first "Unknown Lover" selected. On a dais before the delighted crowd, he woos her without words, but when he seizes and kisses her, the thrill of his kiss and body tells her that it can be none other than Kenneth. She is soabashed, however, that she declares she cannot guess who her "Unknown Lover" is.

Suddenly an inebriated reveler turns out the lights and a wild orgy ensues. Elaine is passed from the arms of one man to another in the darkness and is suddenly carried off by a masked man, thrown into a fast motorboat and whisked out to sea. Here Kenneth reveals himself as the masked kidnapper. He declares that he will keep her out in the boat until she promises to marry him, but the boat catches fire during an attempt to seize her in his arms. The boat runs wild in flames. The pair are helpless. Fred Wagner, who had been spying upon Elaine at the party, sees the burning boat from a distance and in his slow-moving launch goes to her assistance. A terrific explosion - Elaine and Kenneth are hurled into the water -- Kenneth unconscious. Elaine rescues him, pulling him onto a buoy. She swims towards Fred's launch and he pulls her aboard, refusing to go back for Kenneth. But Elaine, threatening to jump overboard, persuades him to turn about and

rescue Kenneth. Enroute home, Fred demands that Elaine set their wedding date, and asks her to admit that she does need his protection after what has happened. She takes the still unconscious Kenneth in her arms and replies: "But he needs my protection much more."

Elaine and Kenneth are married. Kenneth has made promise upon promise to reform. On the wedding night he becomes intoxicated and sensually seeks entrance to his wife's boudoir. Elaine, aflush with love's young dream, is broken-hearted and refuses him, declaring that they will not be man and wife until he has actually demonstrated to her that he can be a success and keep his promises.

The next morning Kenneth receives a visit from his father who is furious over his marriage to Elaine, whom he regards as a "scheming woman", scheming for Kenneth's money. Upon Kenneth's refusal to give her up, he leaves, declaring that he will cut him off without a cent. Kenneth, for the moment, nonplussed as to how for the first he is to earn his own living, remembers a certain dye formula purporting to have great commercial value, worked out by Elaine's father just before his death. He mortgages all of his personal possessions, and with the proceeds starts a factory, rivalling that of Fred Wagner's for the manufacture of dye-stuffs.

While Kenneth succeeds and shows marked ability, to Elaine's consternation, he has become a business machine as wholly engrossed "in making good" that he has apparently forgotten her. She feels that she has launched a boomerang -- by urging him to be a "success" she has lost her lover. Unhappy, she prays for the happy-go-lucky care-free Kenneth of old.

A crucial moment has come in Kenneth's business. He must either secure a huge naval contract for dye stuffs, the money from which will be used to pay off his mortgages now due - or go to the wall. He overworks himself, undergoing a terrific nervous strain but is heedless of physicians' warnings. At the same time, Fred Wagner also bids for the naval contract, but he fears his rival's formula which will enable Kenneth to underbid him by half. At home Kenneth breaks down after Elaine has attempted to draw him into her boudoir and make him forget his troubles. The family physician warns her that business is killing him - that he will die if she does not get him away for a long rest. Believing Kenneth safe in bed, Elaine is amazed to see him fully dressed, staggering out of the house to catch a midnight train for New York where he intends to stave off the impending foreclosure on his mortgages. Her struggles to keep him are unavailing and he leaves. Elaine is desperate.

In man's clothes, she goes to Kenneth's office, opens the safe and deliberately raises the bid for the naval contract. This will definitely make Kenneth lose the contract - and lose his entire business. This has the desired effect. Fred Wagner wins the huge contract and Kenneth is ruined. Elaine tells him that she is glad - now they can devote all their time to regaining his health and then make a fresh start. At this juncture Kenneth is informed that his bid has been raised surreptitiously. He summons Fred and accuses him, but a detective, working on the case, discloses the fact that it was Elaine. Kenneth is dumbfounded and will not believe her explanation that the business was killing him and therefore she killed the business. He declares that she did it to benefit Fred ~~for~~ whom she has always loved, and leaves the house in a nervous frenzy.

Kenneth has been gone a year. Elaine has repaired to her little heart-shaped studio on the beach which she has again opened, apparently to support herself. Frequent visits of Fred Wagner, now extremely prosperous, give rise to the rumor that Elaine will seek a divorce from Kenneth and marry Fred. One night Kenneth returns. He has been shipping before the mast and is in good health. He sees through the heart-shaped window, Elaine and Fred together.

The Unknown Lover.

She sees his shadow, then discovers him. He tells her that he has returned to beg forgiveness, that he has realized she was right -- that he intends to leave her to Fred now for good. But Elaine, reiterating her love for him, explains how she had not in reality ruined his business -- that she had entered into a partnership with Fred, in his name; Fred, with the formula, had been all this while successfully constructing a huge business for him. The lovers are reunited.

The end.

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JUL 16 1925

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